DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 354 474 CG 024 816

AUTHOR Byrne, Christina A.; And Others
TITLE Autonomy as a Predictor of Marital Violence.
PUB DATE Nov 92
NOTE 8p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association for Advancement of Behavior Therapy (26th, Boston, MA, November 19-22, 1992).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Affiliation Need; *Battered Women; Family Violence; Marital Instability; Marriage; *Personal Autonomy; Predictor Variables; Spouses

ABSTRACT

Recent qualitative investigations of abusive men have indicated that power and control of the wife are central themes in incidents of marital violence. Furthermore, anecdotal and empirical evidence suggest that abusive husbands hold more traditional sex-role stereotypes, are more possessive and jealous, and are more controlling than nonabusive husbands. This study investigated the effects of discrepancies between the affiliation needs of wives and husbands on marital violence. Subjects were 272 couples who participated in a longitudinal study of early marriage. Assessment took place 1 month prior to marriage and at 6, 18, and 30 months thereafter. The Autonomy Scale from Jackson's Personality Research Form was used to assess autonomy, and the Marital Adjustment Test was employed to measure relationship satisfaction. Relationship violence was assessed using The Conflict Tactics Scale. Results indicated that at 18 and 30 months of marriage women high in autonomy who married men low in autonomy reported a significantly greater amount of husband-to-wife violence than women low in autonomy. Women high in autonomy who married men low in autonomy did not differ in their reports of violence from women high in autonomy who married men high in autonomy. (ABL)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED354474

Autonomy as a Predictor of Marital Violence

Christina A. Byrne

Ileana Arias

University of Georgia

K. Daniel O'Leary

State University of New York at Stony Brook

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

/ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Christina A. Byrne

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

CG024816

Running Head: AUTONOMY AS A PREDICTOR

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Autonomy as a Predictor of Marital Violence

Recent qualitative investigations of abusive men have indicated that power and control of the wife are central themes in incidents of marital violence. Furthermore, anecdotal and empirical evidence suggest that abusive husbands hold more traditional sex-role stereotypes, are more possessive and jealous, and are more controlling than nonabusive husbands. Thus, abusive men may be higher in needs for affiliation and less tolerant of autonomy in their partners than their nonabusive counterparts. Yet, a husband's need for affiliation or tolerance for partner autonomy, when considered in isolation, may not be as relevant to the occurrence of violence as are his needs in relation to his wife's affiliation and autonomy needs.

This study investigated the effects of discrepancies between the affiliation needs of wives and husbands on marital violence. It was predicted that husbands who are higher in need for affiliation or lower in autonomy than their wives would be more likely to be characterized by domestic violence relative to husbands lower in need for affiliation than their wives.

Method

Subjects were couples who participated in the longitudinal study of early marriage at SUNY at Stony Brook. Assessment took place 1 month prior to marriage and at 6, 18, and 30 months thereafter. Each participant completed questionnaires containing a battery of instruments. Of the 399 couples who originally participated in this study, 272 couples completed all of the assessments.

The Autonomy Scale from Jackson's Personality Research Form (Jackson, 1974) was used to assess autonomy, and the Marital Adjustment Test (MAT; Locke & Wallace, 1959) was employed to measure relationship satisfaction. Relationship violence was assessed using The Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS; Straus, 1979). Participants completed the CTS in reference to their own violence (CTS Self) and in reference to their partners' violence (CTS Spouse).

Results

Initial analyses confirmed that individual affiliation and autonomy needs were not related to violence in the absence of the partner's needs for affiliation and autonomy. Based on the autonomy score of each spouse, couples were then divided into 4 groups: 1) Husband and wife both low in autonomy; 2) Husband low in autonomy and wife high in autonomy; 3) Husband high in autonomy and wife low in autonomy; and

4) Husband and wife both high in autonomy.

A 4(Time) X 4(Autonomy Group) repeated measures multiple analysis of variance on CTS Self and CTS Spouse revealed a significant time by group interaction for women [$F(3,1049) = 2.77$, $p < .05$]. Subsequent analyses of variance yielded a significant main effect for Autonomy Group on women's reports of spouse violence at 18 months [$F(3,252) = 4.79$, $p < .005$] and 30 months [$F(3,204) = 3.18$, $p < .05$] of marriage. This effect remained significant after controlling for marital satisfaction of wives and husbands as evidenced by one way analyses of covariance with the wife MAT at 18 months [$F(4,251) = 9.03$, $p < .0001$] and 30 months [$F(4,203 = 5.70$, $p < .001$] and the husband MAT at 18 months [$F(4,251) = 7.28$, $p < .0001$] and 30 months [$F(4,200 = 7.07$, $p < .0001$] as covariates. This is consistent with the finding that couples in the various autonomy groups did not differ in their marital satisfaction from each other at any point or across time.

Couples were then divided into two groups based on wives' reports of the existence of premarital husband violence. A 3(Time) X 4(Group) X 2(Premarital violence) repeated measures multiple analysis of variance on CTS Self and CTS Spouse revealed a significant 3 way interaction for women [$F(3,736) =$

3.13, $p < .05$]. Subsequent one way (Group) analyses of variance on CTS Spouse revealed that women in group two (wife high in autonomy, husband low in autonomy) who reported premarital violence also reported significantly more violence at 6, 18, and 30 months of marriage [$F(3,246) = 7.36$, $p < .0001$] than other groups. This was not the case for women in group two who reported no premarital husband violence.

In summary, at 18 and 30 months of marriage, women high in autonomy who married men low in autonomy reported a significantly greater amount of husband-to-wife violence than women low in autonomy. Women high in autonomy who married men low in autonomy did not differ in their reports of violence from women high in autonomy who married men high in autonomy. This effect remained significant when controlling for husband MAT and wife MAT. Furthermore, women high in autonomy who married men low in autonomy and reported premarital partner violence also reported significantly more violence later in marriage than the other three groups.

Discussion

Greater victimization among women high in autonomy who married men low in autonomy at 18 and 30 months after marriage suggests that the context in which a husband's desire for control takes place may be an important factor in the occurrence of marital violence.

That is, if a husband's attempt to control his wife is met with resistance, the probability of violence may increase. Furthermore, it appears that the occurrence of premarital violence moderates this finding. Relative to women low in autonomy and women high in autonomy who marry men high in autonomy, women high in autonomy who marry men low in autonomy may be at increased risk for marital violence if they experience premarital violence. That is, among couples predisposed to experience marital violence, discrepancies in affiliation needs where the husband's needs exceed those of his wife show an escalation in violence over time.

This finding will aid in the identification of couples at risk for marital violence. Couples exhibiting the pathogenic autonomy discrepancy early in their marriage can be trained in order to prevent escalation or development of violence. The results of this study also have implications for the treatment of marital violence. Increases in a wife's autonomy in therapy may be met with an increase in violence from her husband if her increased autonomy conflicts with his affiliation needs. Therapy must address husband's tolerance of existing or developing autonomy in their wives by providing nonviolent strategies for negotiating discrepancies in affiliation.

References

Jackson, D. N. (1974). Manual for the Personality Research Form. Goshen, New York: Research Psychology Press.

Locke, H., & Wallace, K. (1959). Short marital adjustment and prediction tests: Their reliability and validity. Marriage and Family Living, 21, 251-255.

Straus, M. A. (1979). Measuring intrafamily conflict and violence: The conflict tactics (CT) scales. Journal of Marriage and the Family, 41, 75-88.